

NARRATIVE ISSUES

Richard O'Hara

Problem in Lieu of Thesis Prepared for the Degree of

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Approved:

Rick Allen, Major Professor
Robert Jessup, Minor Professor
Mike Cunningham, Committee Member

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This Thesis covers a series of etchings created between 1998 and 2000 in completion of the requirements for graduation. The paper covers the origins and implications of the symbology within the artwork as well as the natural settings displayed. It also speaks of the mythos of art and symbols, as well as my strategy in Art making.

Introduction

I initially approached the idea of mark making with both confidence and uncertainty. Early in my studies, I tried telling my life story in my art. I used self-portraits to convey emotional snippets of a personal mythos. Some of these were less than successful because, I concluded, a viewer doesn't like to be accosted by imagery that is so personal it is meaningless. Later, I tried another approach: let nothing personal into my works at all. That didn't work because, quite simply, they became mere attempts in design with no artistic value. Recently, I tried to bridge the gap between pure abstraction and personal mythos by finding the universal in my personal artwork. I approached this problem now in three different media: sculpture, painting, and finally printmaking, the last of which were the most successful and therefore became my primary media for making art. Printmaking allows for the creation of multiples, which helped me obtain separation as an artist from the inherent precious nature of the object I felt in other media. Multiples allowed me to be a more objective viewer of my own art, a step necessary to this Problem in Lieu of Thesis' development.

It was natural to assume that a viewer sees a work and tries immediately to contextualize it. Art historians may try to classify the work by its particular movement,

elements, and influences; artists may try to define the work by the process, media, and image. The most common denominator that our social training has bred into us, however, is the narrative. Viewers usually try to place art in context. Artists and academics sometimes refer to this process of classification as the viewer's "in" to the work, or the element that grabs the viewer's interest. However the "in" is a narrative the viewers create in their own minds, which may or may not be what the artist intended. Thus, I began looking around myself, wanting to see what was leading to these thoughts. I started with the art I appreciate: Gericault's paintings of severed heads and the "Raft of Medusa", Delacroix's historical paintings as well as those dealing with Dante, O'Keefe's skull paintings, and Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson's earthworks. All of these artworks accessed different levels of what I was trying to achieve. In each work, I saw the blending of the personal and the universal "Mythos".

Gericault's painting of the severed heads as well as his Dementia paintings deal with implied narrative through stark image(Eitner 180-2). The "Massacre at Chios" by Delacroix, is a melodrama, admittedly, but there is also an implied story within it. The painting tells a tale through use of a recognizable melodramatic symbol, the old woman clutching the dead body in the foreground (Eitner 186-0). The viewer must ask, was this woman the dead man's mother, lover, relative, or a nurse? That question opens up

possibilities for a number of personal experiences that viewers can bring with them to the piece. Similarly, Georgia O'Keefe implies both the personal and the mythic by setting a skull upon an object. Who put it there and why, the viewer asks. The narrative becomes less personal, perhaps, but it still exists. O'Keefe uses loaded natural images such as the skull and hipbone that bring with them a full range of socio-religious implications (Arnson 366-8). Finally, Holt and Smithson use earthworks to convey both primal visions and astronomical perceptions (Lippard 30-33, 105-7). Their works reference both place and setting, bringing to mind primitive monuments such as Stonehenge and Easter Island; thus their works are both personal and socio-religious. The narrative is still implied, and the artists' touch is still there. The story of Holt and Smithson's modern art structures therefore loses the anonymity of Stonehenge and Easter Island because the artist is known. All these artists share the ability to blend the personal and the universal into a single mythos.

Gericault, O'Keefe, Holt, and Smithson have impacted my work greatly. Like them I used symbols that are natural objects (meaning they exist in nature) but are also very personal for both the viewer and me. I learned both to question where the line between symbol and cliché lies and to understand that the individual will always determine the answer.

Thus I reconsidered my work and, with it, my attempts

at finding the personal within the universal and the universal within the personal. In my earlier works, I was telling too much, sending out the whole story at once, and using inappropriate personal settings. Too much of a story makes an artwork too obvious, too easily classified, and therefore dismissed as a known entity. My works today involve a different sort of introspection that varies from pouring out my own symbols to looking at them with a distilling eye. I attempted an approach that avoids cliché but borders on the recognizable, and I saw new ways of using my own personal vocabulary of symbols as well as accumulating more. Through this discussion and my recognition of symbol and setting, I created a strong art that, through distillation, blended the universal with the personal to create a viewer accessible narrative, one that invited rather than barraged the viewer. This work taught me a great deal about how I view the art making process, and how I approach an empty matrix.

This work explored the use of a distilled narrative to take a personal mythos or story and allow it to become more universal. I joined the use of narrative and story to the universal in art prints to retain the viewer's interest. In pursuing this process I answered the following questions.

1. What are the origins and implications of the symbols, characters, and implied narrative?
2. In what way does the idea of series enhance or detract from this set of images, and how well does a single image stand on its own?
3. How are issues of stylization, setting, space, value structure, and point of view approached and resolved in each image in relation to its content?

Methodology

To answer these questions I created 6 prints. In these I explored the use of narrative and symbols from the personal, distilled to a more universal form. The pieces were to be at least 10x12 inches; I however rejected this limitation while working upon them. I kept a journal while creating these pieces, and after completion I completed a paper about them.

The Paper

In answering this first question, what are the origins and implications of the symbols, characters, and implied narrative, I decided to only hint at the personal, and delve more into the origin of the symbols and their use here. This paper is not a justification of how I see these symbols; it is an explanation of how I hope they are seen. A few of the main symbols I used in the pieces for this Problem in Lieu of thesis, include, yet aren't limited to, dinner settings, clay vessels, building structures, toys, tied objects, and various animals. Each of these has a very certain cause and effect relationship within the works. Culling the herd of symbols was difficult at first, but as I progressed, this chore became more of an elegant form of writing. In making these prints I learned enough to answer this first question.

The use of the dinner setting is a strange symbol: the term describes placement of forks, knives, and spoons, or the tools of eating. Dinner can be seen as ritual, and as ritual it is symbolic of spirit. I remember in South Carolina being forced to learn the proper placing for each of the pieces in a full silver setting, and service. Consumption through devouring, as well as ritual, is implied by the simple setting of the fork and knife. The viewer can easily access these tools and utensils of

consumption and the viewer in this and other cultures easily recognizes them. In the narrative their use becomes apparent through placement; sometimes they are showing their direct and proper place, implying consumption about to occur, or else they're disarrayed, implying interrupted, or past consumption.

The objects in disarray imply violence. I found myself looking at crime scene photos in real crime docu-dramas on A&E Investigative reports, as well as photos of archeological digs such as can be found in National Geographic. These examples imply a strict narrative. The scientist or detective works to piece such a mystery together: by recreating the narrative. The prints in these works then by association imply narrative subtly. These prints access a visual structure that's already familiar in the mind of most viewers; the pieces draw the viewer into a given set of unspoken rules. The narrative implies that some activity happened here before, something good or bad. The setting suddenly takes on a deeper meaning, one where the piece begins to tell a story in the viewer's imagination, one that I refused to direct. I saw a way to lay the framework of a story, by hints and implication rather than by presenting obvious conclusions. The disjunctive nature of this out of place narrative was designed to force the viewer's comfort askew. The pieces aren't meant to be beautiful things that lift the spirit, rather they are disturbing things that demand explanation.

Analysis though, is not wholly possible as the story is left open to the viewer. I gave up the control I demanded before, and learned to trust that the viewers' interest would carry through the piece without depending on lofty wordy titles, or descriptive placards to familiarize the viewer with the story. This idea of such a placard brings to mind a map with the words "You are here," the emblazoned directions would make sure everybody knew exactly the meaning and story of the piece. With the meaning being so concrete, the viewers' interest would be lost.

The ritual of a seated dinner is referenced in the place setting. Old southern melodramas and antique settings filled with silver and china dishes, the after church South Carolina trips to restaurants, all these are rituals and remnants I wanted to imply indirectly through narrative imagery. A dinner is served, and consumed, in 2 to 8 courses defined by forks, plates, knives, napkins, glasses and the like. In the prints, the leavings of these definitions are set in the backgrounds. The cups implied through organic containers, forks set carefully, knives as well. I decided to imply their meaning as opposed to explain it. This allows the viewer to construct a narrative that has meaning within their individual history. A few different interpretations in the pieces include meals about to occur before some tragedy struck, or the animals are threatened with consumption by the impinging humanity, or it could be seen as a reference to the disappearance of

the crew of the Mary Celeste, a famous ship which was found in the Bermuda Triangle, meals set ready to eat, tea steaming, but the people had disappeared. The ambiguous nature of the interpretations is why I chose these dinner settings. I decided though to keep it subtle. The knife is too harsh, so I use it only in distant small settings. I didn't want the pieces to be seen as some remake of the movie "Psycho". I demanded more subtlety. The fork and spoon aren't as threatening, so their use becomes closer to the viewer. This placement allows access to the viewer on two different levels: the directly conscious foreground, and the subtly placed background. As closer subjects these place settings are usually near the bottom of the composition where it would be seen as if sitting down to eat. They become a counter point to the subject of the piece. The main subject, such as the Serval, the Ship, or the Antelope, suddenly lessens in interest slightly when it possesses a counterpoint that demands a glance from the viewer. This allowed me to control how the eye travels through the piece without revealing too much.

Dinnerware is a term I use to describe the cups, plates, and bowls. Like the settings consumption becomes implied through their use. In a similar vein the things upon which we eat are symbols of survival, preparation, and family. Food allows a family unit to survive and references a social standard that has existed all the way back to humans' hunter-gatherer days. My first dinnerware

set came from an abandoned trailer I'd bought for some small amount. I remember distinctly how uncomfortable the scattered dishes and glasses made the kitchen feel. It felt to me like I was digging out the neurons from the brain of the home. I felt like an invader. This memory became a place of beginning for these pieces.

I took the symbol of the coffee cup from its presence in the print shops here and in Clemson. I became aware of this form's placement in my surroundings on a constant basis. They hold pencils, hang from the walls, measure, and of course contain coffee. The coffee cups imply sleeping and wakening, as well as business. These three ideas seem to conflict; though not a day goes by in the Printmaking room without the constant hustle and bustle at the coffeepot. This modern business ritual has imbedded itself in what we consider socially acceptable. As an effect of this, the coffee cup has become a prevalent background image in a place of work as well as the home.

The form pushed its way into the scene of my work at first as a joke in light hearted gestural abstractions; like a coffee cup as a boat, or a coffee cup as a home. As I approached these problem works though, I used the cup as an empty remnant, a fossil of normality, empty of the expected brew. This implies a place where people once were, a place where activity once occurred in the expected hustle and bustle of everyday life. Learning from this, I approached the use of the cup in another way, as a socio-

religious tool approached by someone or thing ignorant of its common use. I began drawing them, hung from strings to imply a more spiritual use of the cup. A tool of warding, or a tool of weight in water, a creation with more meaning than pulling a drink from the table to the mouth. I looked at shamans' huts in magazines, and a Voodoo museum in New Orleans to approach how a sentient alien to the cup's purpose could use such a thing. I used my awareness of the norm, and an assumed misunderstanding of its use. The implication I wanted was of a civilization or a family grouping, built in layers off the bones of the first. This would reinforce the archaeological feel I discussed earlier and invoke a cultural cycle of rebirth, destruction, and reuse. This became a figural reference, not only in the fact it is made for and by the hand, but also in its use as an object of spirit. I then carefully left out such lofty sentiments in how I drew the objects specifically in order to avoid the ridiculous and the comical. I had planned simplicity and sincerity and feel that the results were successful, especially in the "Window Orifice" piece, where the Seal and the Otter just meander by the string of hung cups.

The plate is a bit blatant as a tool of presentation and consumption, so, I tend to use it less frequently. The occasional plate is visible and is, of course, a direct reference to consumption. In truth it could even be a pun on art, "eat what I show you, eat what is there, consume

art." The origins of my use of it as a symbol date back to South Carolina and helping my mother get the 'good' china down. What made one plate better than another? In these pieces I wanted the few plates I used to mean more than a remnant of the normal, or a pun. I had wanted to push it into a realm where it became a spiritual implement like the cups. Unfortunately, this didn't seem to occur. It became detritus, like P. K. Dick's "Kipple" from "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep." In that reference the failure of the original intent didn't bother me. One of the first things I realized while doing these pieces is I had to give up control. In order to make the plate into what I had originally wanted; I had to force the viewer to see it my way. I decided that prints based on the image of plates became too much of a pun on printmaking. So I let the importance of the dish fade, and become tied to other things. This seemed to work best in the end.

I realized early in my graduate career, that I missed the undergraduate days before my media was decided, when I spent the days sculpting, painting, and throwing pots. The creation of the pot was a near spiritual reference, I was creating vessels. A thrown pot is tied to the figural as it is handcrafted, it conforms to the human proportion. In the Problem works, I used them as standing remnants of a human occupancy, a notation of violence in their shattered remains, or as a plant container. The remnants access the read of the archaeological, or crime scene reinforcing the

dinnerware's' read. The life of the plant is contained where as its benefit to the environment around it is not. The placement and usage of the containers begin to access a similar idea as the place settings, reuse by someone or something that never quite understood their original use, and through that, they begin to enter the spiritual or ritualistic in their usage.

I began my college career in the Clemson University Architectural Design Department. My college education began with the study of the meaning of structure. Building structures within these prints change their meaning. I started using the home and courtyard as a place of secret, a place invaded. As I moved into the work proper of this Problem in Lieu of thesis, I found that my idea of the structures had changed from those of a home, to community. The origin of the type of structure in these works is nonstandard as well. I wanted to create an architecture that referenced different cultures, a pluralistic form which the viewer could almost point at and say "that's Anasazi, no, that's African, no, it's eastern Russian, no, it's southwestern." This became important to me to force the viewer to question the origin of this place. This is a near real place that becomes mythic, and as a myth, it defies direct cultural distinctions. Joseph Campbell talks about the pluralism of myth in such books as "The Hero With a Thousand Faces" and with Bill Moyers in "The Power of Myth". I found the ideas in these two written works to

greatly influence the way I approached the structure in the prints. I allowed the tubular tower to be Anasazi, African, Irish, and American creating an 'in' to a multicultural viewing. Though I demanded the cultural front to remain ambiguous, I still wanted the place to feel intimate as a precious location can be violated. I tried to form settings that looked like they had a form or purpose. I drew back from my architectural design days in Clemson and really sat down and thought about what these rooms could be, how big they were, what their form versus function demanded they become. I decided to leave the doors open. I tried adding doors into earlier prints before these works. I found the criticism of the screen doors being so recognizable a detraction against the idea they represented. Doorways and windows are the orifices of a structure. This had two important implications; one, being a failure to be able to directly date the structure by the design of the door, the other, being the creation of a tension caused by the home or structure being vulnerable. If you follow the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright (Hyman 420-592), his approach to the structure as an organism allowed a new use of space. The house became built around the common room. As an organic entity, structure took on a connotation of anthropomorphic ideals. The open orifice implied to me the leavings of a corpse, or the vulnerability of the helpless. By laying it open in such a way, the implications of robbery, and violence became an

odd metaphor to the implication of simple trust in villages and small town America that was lost as I grew up.

The next set of symbols I want to write about are toys. Growing up in Georgetown was not always easy. I didn't have a lot of things, but I had a sailboat I adored, along with the requisite army men and science fiction toys of my generation. In the pieces of this Problem in Lieu, I placed toys carefully within the composition to partially obfuscate their form. Since blatancy on that level would ruin these works: the toys are dangerous in their limited interpretations. I didn't want the pieces to be seen as a messy child's play-space that would limit their preciousness and destroy the mystery in these works. I wanted these toys to be symbols adding to the composition. By placing them in such a way that their original form becomes questionable, these toys become something the viewer can be delighted to discover and then question their meaning. The concealed sailboats and small animals become a surprise instead of the main subject of the works. In the beginning though, the toys were essential to the content. A toy implies a child and therefore, a support structure: this could be called family. The leavings of this family become like the crime scene idea, it implies a narrative.

After I decided these toys would become a part of this narrative work, I had to sit back and decide what kind of toy to use. At first, I approached this on an intuitive

level, I collected a huge mass of these /things/ I wanted to draw. As I considered this more carefully, I began to carve away most of the original implements. I looked at pictures in magazines, watched foreign films, and drew from the days of my childhood; I also went digging through a friend's four-year-old son's toy chest. I then cross-referenced my original amassing of objects and rejected about 90 percent of it. I used objects that retained recognition across cultural boundary, yet didn't date the works. After these considerations, boats, rattles, tops, and animals became the objects I used the most.

The tied and suspended objects are a direct reference to ritual. Voodoo, Native American, and Pagan rituals all use the tied knot as a ritual ideal. I researched these rituals in books and events, as well as places like New Orleans. Dream weavers, wishing trees, voodoo idols and spirit zombies, all are intertwined with tied knots and ritual strapping. This is a human action, a human ritual. As a human ideal it is inherently figural and narrative in nature. It is the action of binding that causes the ritual to have meaning. The knots become a narrative of belief. In the prints I used the remnants of these rituals to form an undercurrent of implied spirituality and figural presence.

The last symbol I want to talk about in answering the origins and implications question, is the idea of animal. Animals are seen as spiritual by most of the cultures I've

borrowed so freely from. Totems are accepted as a relevant part of the social structure: Native Americans as well as early Europeans used totems to describe the spirit, and defined their humanity in terms of the animal. Also, animals were seen as a figural stand-in, a replacement of the human and an acceptance of the near human. In the Problem works, the houses and settings become populated, and this begins to imply a society. The rituals and precious spaces become owned, even if in a transitory state by migratory animals. On the narrative side of things, I wanted it to become questionable whether these animals created these settings, or existed inside of them. I wanted their existence to become ambiguous; are they real or spirit; literal, or metaphor? These questions are an open invitation to engage the viewer.

These symbols all have an origin, either through conscious readings, or social upbringing, or carefully decided placement. By allowing their meanings to lean towards the ambiguous, I allow the viewer to see in the piece a story uniquely theirs. I lay forth the possibilities and the groundwork, but leave part of the work of completing these pieces to the mind of the viewer. I present implications, but refuse to draw the conclusions. This allows the viewers to engage the pieces without being hammered by 'My' story, but to create one of their own. I presented a playground that the viewers' imagination could engage. The ambiguity became the strength of the works.

The second question I sought to answer with this work was, in what way does the idea of series enhance or detract from this set of images, and how well does a single image stand on its own. I had to decide if the pieces I had created could be considered a series. When viewing them repeatedly I came to the conclusion they were not a series in the strict sense, especially as they stand just as strong alone. In regards to this question I'd have to say the pieces can be viewed over all as a 'series' or grouping and stand strongly, but I at first felt the pieces stood stronger on their own. As I stated earlier, the pieces work best when the viewer tells his own story. This brings the viewer into the piece making them an important part of the piece's completion. So, there was a line I had to draw about how much I am willing to reveal. In this narrative work, too much information kills the mystery, and the viewers' 'in' to the work. I originally thought the art invoked more thought when viewed in smaller groupings of 1 to 3. The entire range of my last two years work, seen together could end the mystery, and form a deluge of information that would desensitize the viewer to the style of the work. These prints could be seen as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, taken separately the snippet of the photo is hard to see and understand, but once it is seen in it's entirety, it loses interest upon the culmination of

understanding. Once a piece of art becomes easily categorized as understood and known, the viewer tends to pass on and lose interest. My first thought was that these prints avoid that in smaller groupings and they were best viewed as such. However, when I discussed these conclusions with my professor and other artists, I discovered perhaps my paranoia was unfounded and a larger grouping could be viewed safely. I reevaluated this conclusion and I now conclude that 8 to 10 are a safe viewing number. Part of this reevaluation was due to a minor display I had on the third floor where four pieces were displayed together. I felt these pieces made a great teaser to the exit show. And it was more than my original allowable display count. So after collecting more opinions I decided that my original answer was wrong and that the grouping could be more. The main issue to avoid is simply desensitizing the viewer to the style. I now feel that magic number is around 10. That is enough to engage the viewer and still leave them desiring more explanation.

In answering the last question, how are issues of stylization, setting, space, value structure, and point of view approached and resolved in each image in relation to it's content, I used a few strategies. At first I used a journal, and it helped me see what I was thinking when I envisioned the pieces. To answer this question completely

though, I watched how these pieces came together, the exact process I used to make art. To answer this question, I will explain my approach to stylization, setting, space, value structure, and point of view as I approach it in my work.

The stylization of these pieces is derived from my style of drawing. This drawing approach changed immensely when I began teaching. For two years I became obsessed with gesture as art. When I began etching however, I learned to layer my drawings. The stylization's I created began to be a mixture of the media and my drawing skill. I made bolder changes and found myself digging up old sketches from my undergraduate years to see how I used to love detail work, but back then, the media didn't support refining the image in the same style that Intaglio offered. My work improved greatly because of what occurred on the plate, and the fact I could change it with burnishers, and scrapers. The loss of the "precious" quality of the piece emboldened me to make greater changes, multiples allowed me to attack my art and make the changes it needed undergo in order to grow. In drawing, this process of change is too simple for my work. Change can come so fast that the image was lost before the idea has completely taken form. The ideas became jumbled, with too much being said at once. But in the Intaglio process, I am forced to refine my steps before I set the piece to the plate, and between each piece and the next. Etching taught me to make careful decisions. This process has improved my art greatly.

The setting in these works is an amalgamation of reality, fantasy, and possibility. I remember the courtyard I sat in outside of Georgetown during the plantation tours in 1994. This place seemed unreal, a pocket outside of time. In a trip to Cherokee North Carolina, I visited the Cherokee lands there and toured a historical park. It possessed this same disjunctive feel. I set out to blend a mundane ideal with this time out of space feel I got from these southern plantations and Native American settings. It began in the Courtyard series, and then grew from there. In the pieces for the Problem in Lieu of Thesis, I took what I learned from that series I'd made, and tried to make it subtler. The parts of this setting I insisted on keeping, were the remains of a human presence, a sense of age, and the feeling of wrongness offset by the placid characters of the piece. The Serval stands there unaffected by his surroundings, the Seal swims through a place it doesn't realize belongs in the air, a drowned home.

When I created the space, I noticed I usually began with the rectangle, empty, and began making straight grid patterns. Specifically, I made matrixes in which the linear elements were mapped out. This helped me design interesting picture planes where the eye had flow patterns through the image that were designed. Then I began searching through imagery I found interesting. I would look for an instance that captured the feel of these

pieces. Usually it would be something simple like an animal, or a wall. Then I would take this element completely out of it's context while changing it to make it my own. In the print "Serval", I took the dreidle out of its context, along with the konji placed on the toy, as well as the animal to place them in this otherworldly setting. This accentuated this feel I recognized in the images before. It also added to the uncomfortable feel of the work. I wanted to seduce the viewer as well, so another strategy I used was making the prints initially look 'pretty'. This makes the pieces more inviting to the viewer. In "Window Orifice", the Seal and Otter placidly float in this underwater setting, yet when you get closer the details, nearly hidden in the shadowy depths, become more apparent. This deception allows the pieces to become acceptable to viewers' who would pass over blatantly violent pieces.

Value structure is approached in each piece after the line-etch. I begin with an idea of the time of day I wish for the setting, and then I decide the compass axis of the piece. This becomes a technical exploration after the initial decisions of time of day with the one exception being separation of form. If the forms in the composition become too similar in value, the forms can blur, then the piece appears as a gray mass. I had to be careful to keep the forms clear. The eye's flow can be affected in the value strategy. Points of interest are offset by

counterpoints of lights or darks. The eye flows towards the lightest light and the darkest dark, by using the value structure with the linear mapping and repetition, the eye can be guided into the composition.

When considering point of view in these works I was reminded of a work by Friedrich, "Wanderer Over a Sea of Mist," painted in 1818. His strategy placed a surrogate viewer in the picture plane. In my work, I wanted the point of view to be from a viewer within the setting, a similar strategy. The question I refused to answer to myself was who was this viewer. By not answering this question, I allow the viewer to be anyone. I could insist on making it from the angle of a bug, or a fish, or anything. The point of view of each piece is a glance from someone within the setting itself. I wanted this view to engage the viewer, make them feel that they were a part of this otherworldly setting. Perhaps as in "Window Orifice" they were crouching nearby underwater, watching, or peering across the sandy setting of "Bound" at the Antelope pulling at the attached ropes. By placing the point of view within a setting, it makes the viewer a voyeur, stealing unasked for glances. It helps create an intimate space. On the narrative side, it brings the viewer into the story. And by making the viewer a part of this story, it brings their experiences into the piece. So point of view became a crucial consideration in the creation of these narrative pieces.

I learned quite a bit about my art making process during this project. The specifics here include the value of multiples, patience, trust, and discerning the good from the bad. I worked on over fourteen pieces for this Project in Lieu of Thesis, and after all was said and done, I included eight prints. Almost one half of the original number of prints I'd originally created were put aside. I learned to look at my own art with a much more callous eye, that it is better to throw out the mediocre so the good can shine. I learned that less is better, and ostentatious presentation doesn't cover the bald spots in an unrefined idea. I also learned that to build upon an idea is to improve that idea's quality.

The idea of multiples shattered the fear I possessed before. When the fear of losing my 'idea' left, along with it went the preciousness of the object I was creating. This allowed me to see my art without the pedestal of adoration I'd gazed upon it with before. Printmaking brought this refinement my art needed to grow. In this Project, the multiples ideal helped me see that the pieces I'd made could be included, or discarded. It seems so obvious in hindsight that every piece is not precious. I remember one of my first critiques with Rick Allen where I took a print from the wall and tore it into 4 pieces to show the good areas from the bad, that same idea I now use

with the entire image. I am willing to throw out an image to keep the idea strong.

I'd begun learning patience in art making when I first stepped into the Sculpture department under the tutelage of Jim Bonnacoursi, now 10 years later the fruits of those seeds have finally fallen from the tree. This project taught me more about patience than any other body of work I've tried to create. Each plate demanded individual attention and care. You can't rush acid; you can't rush aquatint and get good results. The methods I use demand three trips through the acid bath and there's no changing that. The images demanded as much care as the plates. When I'd decided that secrecy kept the interest fresh, suddenly I couldn't display the body and soul of the idea as I had in Painting and Sculpture. Care in the selection of imagery as well as composition became more important than the media upon which it was placed. Considerations of theme, composition, and symbol couldn't be arbitrarily decided. The patience I now use has added maturity to the work.

Trusting the viewer and the art has also been a difficult lesson to learn. Even a year ago, I demanded so much control in the interpretation of the images I made, I suffocated the art. This Project though further taught me that the viewer is a viable part of the image and the sole witness to its meaning. This new awareness came from my return to Narrative work. It was further refined in this

Project though, and I now see in my work a better approach to making art than any other I've used before.

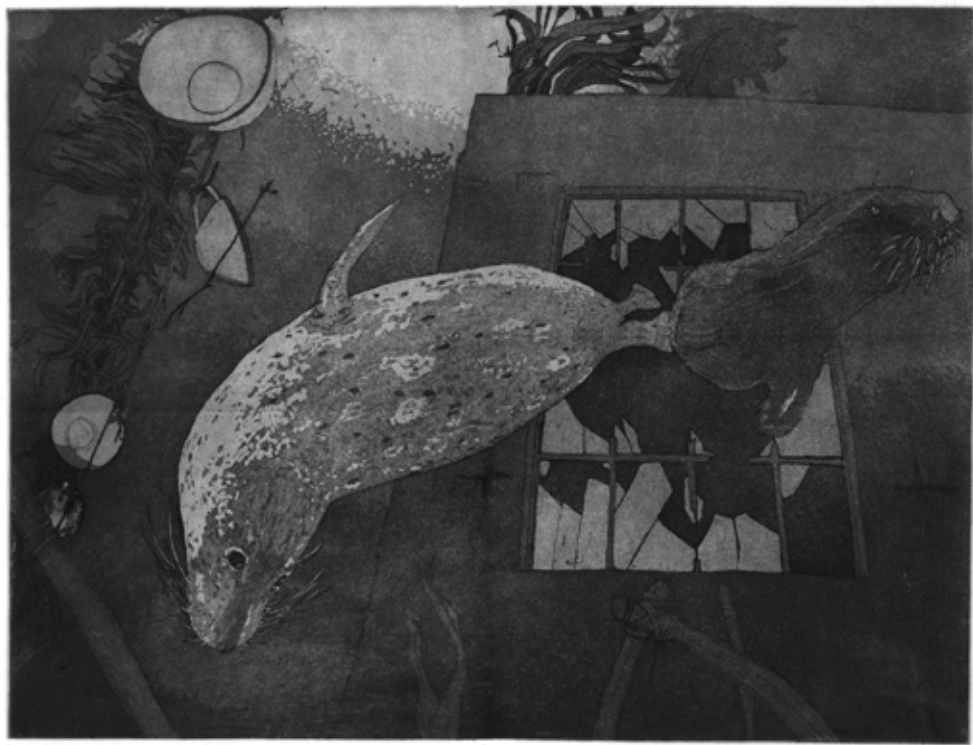
One of the most important things I've learned in this Project though is when to let an image go. I completed over fourteen plates for this project. I did not include but eight of them. This ideal is new to me. In other media, the expense of the materials was so staggering that I would never dream of tossing a canvas or throwing away a weeks worth of work in steel. I spent an entire semester refurbishing plates though, and from the pieces I created, I won prizes in shows. Printmaking lends itself to recycling, so suddenly the expense wasn't an all-encompassing concern. I could toss an image and reuse the plate. Three of the final pieces in the Problem works are in fact on refurbished plates. This gave me new confidence in judging my imagery. That idea alone helped improve my art more than anything else. The fact I could stop a print even after its 'completion' and say, "This isn't the best use of the idea, and it will weaken the whole of the grouping." helped my art grow through my discerning eye.

In conclusion, what I enjoyed most about these Problem works was the return to Storytelling and Drawing. Narrative imagery brought me into the art field, and through drawing, my interest in it began. While approaching this Problem, I felt as if I'd returned to my true idea of 'Art'. I feel like the narrative is the best voice to use with my art, and drawing through printmaking

the best media.

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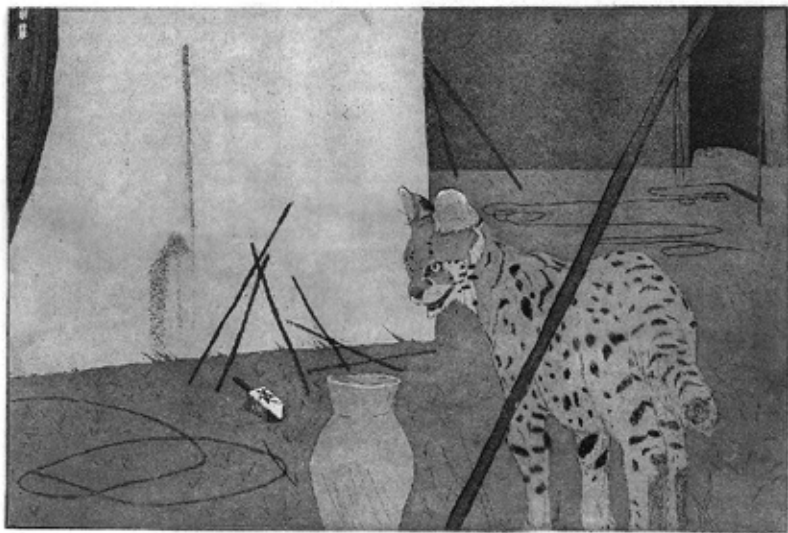


4p

Window Orifice

Reh
00

Figure 1: Window Orifice



Serval

Pick
PA

Figure 2: Serval

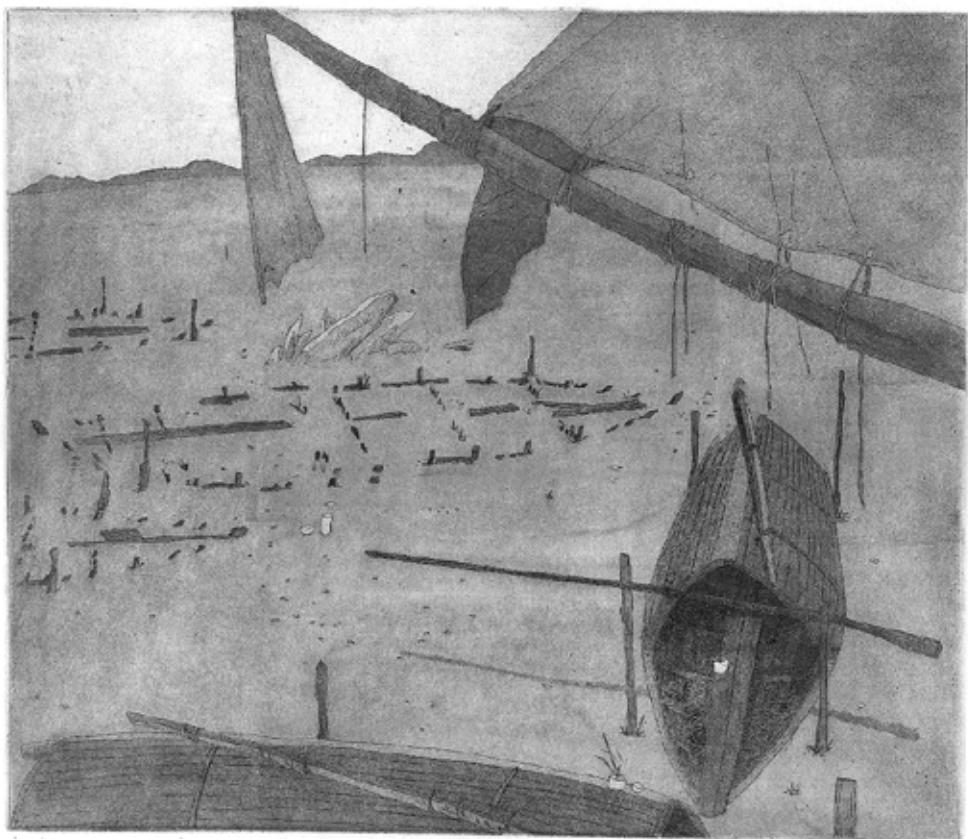


4p

The Boat

R. B. C.

Figure 3: The Boat



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Desert +

Pat 1.00

Figure 4: Desert



1916

Entangled

RH
00

Figure 5: Entangled

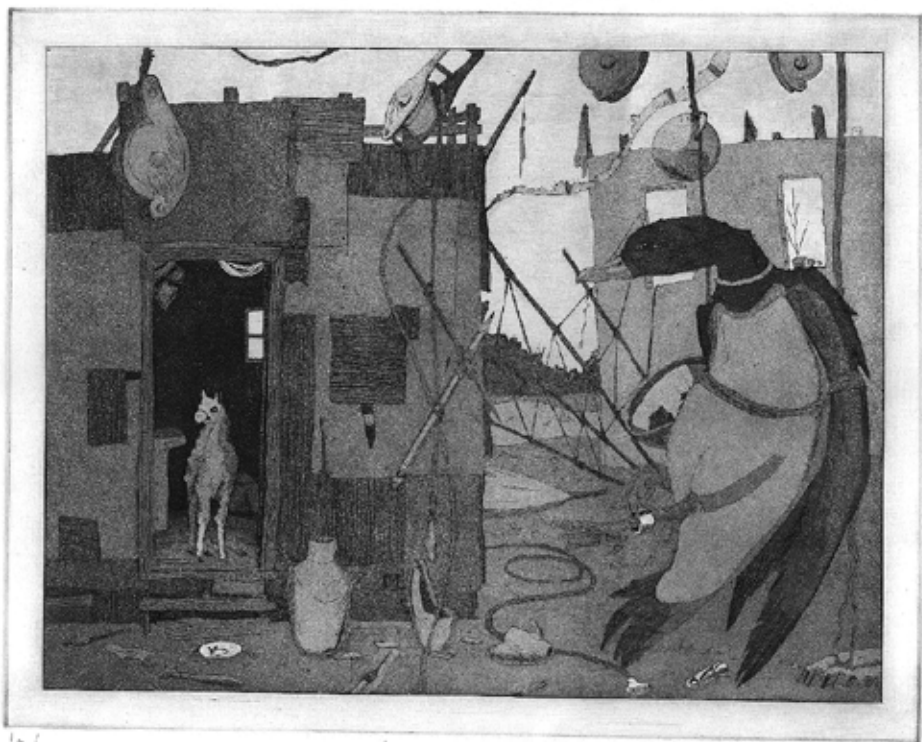


710

The Cougar

Roll
00

Figure 6: The Cougar

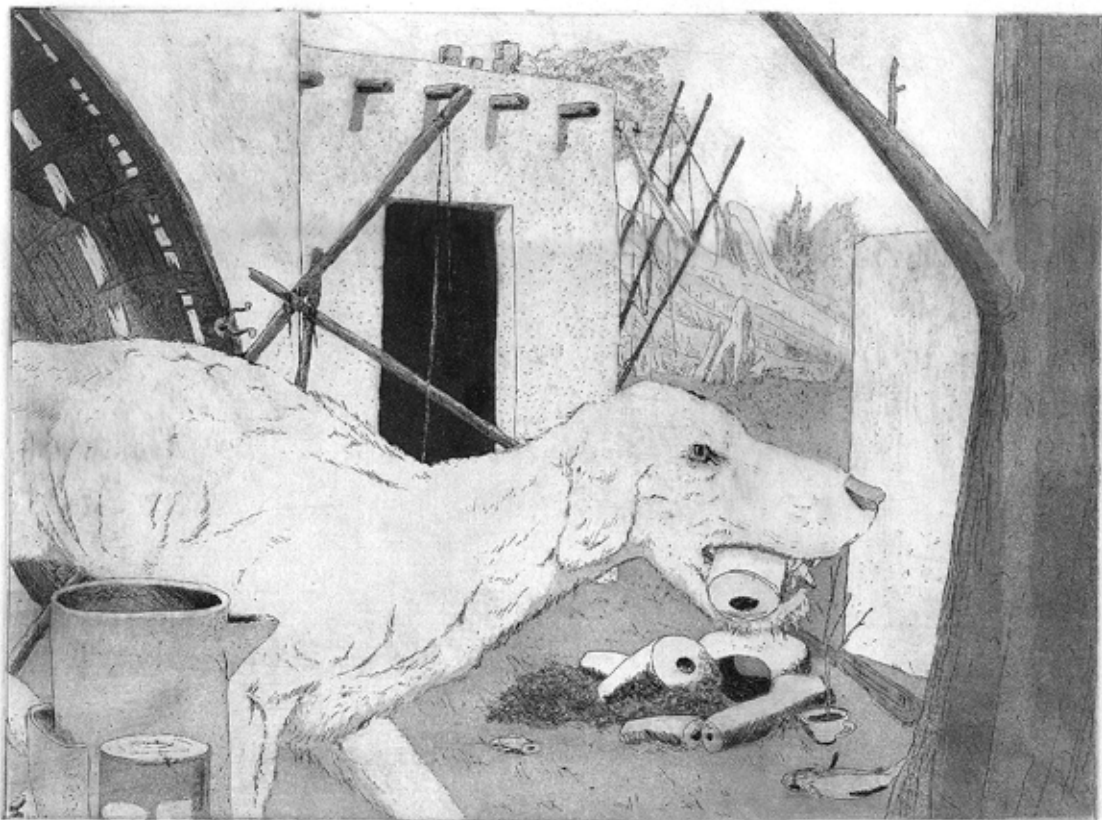


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Suspended

Robt
00

Figure 7: Suspended



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Whippet Hybrid

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Figure 8: Whippet Hybrid